

Researcher

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Title of Project

Pre-Task Planning, Task-Specific Anxiety,
and Performance in L2 Speaking Tasks

**Research Supervisor**

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TIRF Research Topic Investigated

Individual Learner Differences and Effective Language Education

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Bio

Shujing Zhao is a Ph.D. candidate in Applied Linguistics at Northern Arizona University. Her research interests include instructed second language acquisition, particularly task-based language teaching and individual differences, as well as research methodology. Her dissertation investigates how different types of pre-task planning influence second language learners' task-specific anxiety, planning behaviors, and speaking performance.

Project Summary

This proposed dissertation study investigates how pre-task planning affects second language (L2) learners' anxiety and speaking performance during tasks. Specifically, the study examines how guided planning, free planning, and no planning conditions affect learners' task-specific anxiety, planning behavior, and oral task performance. Although pre-task planning has been a widely studied topic in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), previous research has focused mostly on linguistic outcomes, and we still know little about learners' emotional experiences and actual planning processes. At the same time, recent research has increasingly emphasized the dynamic and task-specific nature of L2 anxiety during speaking tasks.

The study will recruit approximately 120 international students enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions. Participants will complete a monologic problem-solving speaking task under one of the three planning conditions. Anxiety will be measured at multiple stages of the task cycle using a Visual Analog Scale and a post-task questionnaire. Learners' speaking performance will be analyzed using measures of complexity, accuracy, lexis, fluency, and functional adequacy, and planning notes will be coded to examine learners' planning behaviors.

The findings are expected to contribute to both research and pedagogy by clarifying how different types of planning influence learners' anxiety and speaking performance. The study also aims to provide practical guidance for teachers, curriculum designers, and program administrators for designing



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speaking activities that are both linguistically effective and emotionally supportive for multilingual learners in higher education contexts.